1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

The rainfall ranges from twenty-two to twenty-seven inches, in normal years, and is heavier as one moves from north to south. The important point that must be kept sight of is the fact that ninety percent of the rain falls in June, July, August, and September, while the months from October through June are almost totally dry. Indeed even within the four-month rainy season, about eighteen inches of the annual rainfall comes during July and August, so that in exceptionally dry years, June and September can easily turn out to be rainless months.

The various seasons are tied closely to the basic facts of rainfall and latitude. As the rain begins in June the dry sandy soil suddenly comes to life with large stretches of new grass and new leaves on the died-up thorn bushes. From atop one of the Bornu ridges, or from the roof of a house, the entire landscape, as far as the eye can see, starts to change color from yellow-brown to a soft green. The weather cools delightfully, the rains become more frequent, and the short daily storms freshen the air. The people call this period "the rain," and consider it by far the most pleasant time of the year, even though there is extra work for everybody because this is the planting and hoeing season, and there is as well the extra unpleasantness of increased numbers and endless varieties of insects that thrive at this time. After the rains in the months of October and November, and often into mid-December the proximity to the equator produces a short, hot season with clear, still days. In a sense this is autumn. The green of summer fades and the bushland changes to light browns, yellows and grays, except for the ripening millet in the fields, and the evergreen Nim tree. Towards the end of this season the weather cools, and a daily wind from the north to northeast blows in from the Sahara. This is the famous Harmattan that even coats shoreward sides of ships with red dust 100 miles off the coast of West Africa. It starts up about eight o'clock in the morning, to wane by about four in the afternoon, making for relatively cool, still mornings and evenings, with rather harsh, sandy winds, for most of the day, so that one wants to cover face and eyes when riding on horseback, especially into the wind. The people have a special word for this time of year which translates as "winter" but which also means "harvest," since the main crops—millet, guinea corn, and ground-nuts—are harvested towards the end of autumn and beginning of winter. By the end of February or beginning of March the coolness of winter has gone. The Harmattan wind still blows but it gets hotter every day and the nights, although windless and a trifle cooler than the days, begin to approach the daytime temperature. Indeed it is not uncommon for the temperature to remain about 100° F for several weeks on end, so that when a break finally comes, ninety degrees seems like an exuberantly pleasant relief. This is the hot season, called "the heat" locally, and considered by all to be the most unpleasant time of year, which gives even greater sweetness to the cooling rains when they finally arrive in June.

There are, then, in all, four seasons: the rains from June to September; a short, hot season in October and November; a cooler, windy winter from December to February; and a sharply hot dry period from March to June. Another way of looking at the seasons, also used by the people, and one which will be utilized to some extent in this book, is to simply speak of a dry season, from September to June, and a wet season from mid-June to mid-September. Obviously the contrast between the various seasons of the dry months is not nearly so great as between the rainy months and the rest of the year.

161 has been declining in the present century. The Kanuri Empire
[175] had suffered final defeat at the hands of Rabeh's invading forces in 1890, and the countryside had been ravaged in the
[164] succeeding decade. Venereal disease appears to have spread
[842] widely throughout the population leaving in its wake a marked decline in fertility and a resultant decrease in numbers of
311 the Kanuri population. There is consequently little pressure
[137] for land to farm. Large stretches of brush country are unworked, and the denser sections, along old water-courses, are
136 veritable jungles of brush and thorn. Larger wild-life have long since disappeared from Bornu, forced out by many centuries of human occupation, but some of the denser section of thicket might well support them today. A small herd of elephants is reported around Gumsa, in Geidam District, and of course elephants can be found in the extensive marshes along Lake Chad, but by and large the only game one sees are gazelle, monkeys, and birds, including occasional ostriches.

361 The Kanuri are a sedentary, agricultural people, who live in villages and towns. The fields which they farm encircle their villages. They are never found living in dispersed home-
369 steads. A basic division exists between Kanuri village life and Kanuri life in the towns and cities. This division corresponds to the classic distinctions between folk and urban polar extremes. Urban life was present in pre-contact Kanuri culture
[162] and consequently is well integrated into Kanuri culture. In fact, the Kanuri cities of the eighteenth century were unques-

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433 est factors affecting crop fluctuations from year to year. The seven cases of loss in crop which resulted from inattention to farm work because of other activities, refer mainly to economic pursuits, especially retail and wholesale trade, which took the man away from his household during the growing season. The one exception to this rule was a man who had been to Maiduguri with his family in order to fight a court case.

The table on occupation and crop production reveals the pattern of crop production among the various groups in the community. The increases and decreases in production give some measure of the amount of variation that may be expected from year to year. What follows is a discussion of the factors that affect this variation.

[164] The growing season is also a time of general biological in-
• [136] crease in Bornu. The rain not only brings the blessing of fertility to the land, it also initiates a period of increased malaria, guinea worm and other plant and animal infestations, as well as the arrival of cattle nomads whose herds may stray into a cultivator's plots, and periodic hordes of locusts. These factors may at any time reduce a farmer's yield and add a constant element of uncertainty to his life. It is no wonder that prayers, charms, and divinatory practices are utilized in combination with the more "rational" agricultural techniques.

The amount of land under cultivation, and its location close to, or far away, from the settlement varies with the kind of primary occupational interest of the farm owner. This is easily seen in the table of average yields above, in which farmers and craftsmen have much larger yields than traders or religious and political specialists. These figures point up the fact that in Bornu a man's non-farming activities especially if they are in trade, politics or religion, tend to impinge